



Washington State
Department of Social
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ADSA Aging & Disability
Services Administration

EMPLOYEE TRANSITION FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Understanding Employee Needs

Final Report
June 1, 2004

Employee Transition Focus Groups

For Supporting Employees Through the Downsizing of Fircrest and the Consolidation of the State's Residential Habilitation Centers – Institutions for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

June 1, 2004

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Executive Summary

In adopting the state's 2003-05 Omnibus Operating Budget, the legislature directed DSHS to downsize the RHC program at Fircrest School by four cottages during the 2003-05 Biennium, and develop a transition plan for the facility. A Preliminary Transition Plan was submitted to the legislature in January 2004 and identified seven major areas or processes directly involved with downsizing including client identification resource development, capital and facilities, client transition, quality assurance, retention of licensed professional services and employee transition.

Fircrest School employees provide essential services for the facility's residents, providing residential programs, health care, and administrative services to protect the health and safety of vulnerable residents and keep the institution running. To support Fircrest School employees, an Employee Transition Work Team was formed to develop the requirements and document the processes for programs designed to transition employees through downsizing.

To better understand the needs of employees involved in a downsizing activity, the Fircrest Downsizing and RHC Consolidation Project Support Unit conducted 11 employee focus groups with RHC employees, as well as a sampling of Case Managers and SOLA staff. The objectives for the focus groups included determining what resources and services employees believe are most important to support employees through a downsizing process, to help retain employees, to assist employees facing separation, and to enhance communication with employees.

Employee feedback from the focus groups was reviewed and categorized by statewide preferences, site-specific preferences, and by narrative data. Based on the employee feedback, a Technical Advisory Work Group developed recommendations addressing employee preferences. These recommendations included a communication plan; career transition resources; training; and identification of policy and resource needs for three areas -- post-separation medical coverage, voluntary and early retirement, and internal agency position holds.

The next steps for the employee transition focus group recommendations include:

- Evaluation of the feasibility of implementing the recommendations
- Implementation of select employee transition recommendations within local authority and budget constraints
- Identification of resource needs for selected recommendations and review current resources
- Completion of a detailed plan of services for employees who may be affected by the downsizing, to be available by the end of July 2004
- Submission of budget impact items for the supplemental (if needed) and 2005-07 biennial budget process

Specific recommendations and accomplishments toward those recommendations as of the publication of this report are provided on pages 13-14.

Purpose and Objectives

In adopting the state's 2003-05 Omnibus Operating Budget, the legislature directed DSHS to downsize the RHC program at Fircrest by four cottages during the 2003-05 Biennium, and develop a transition plan for the facility. A Preliminary Transition Plan was submitted to the legislature in January 2004 and identified seven major areas or processes directly involved with downsizing including client identification resource development, capital and facilities, client transition, quality assurance, retention of licensed professional services and employee transition.

The employees of a Residential Habilitation Center provide essential services to residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Approximately 700 employees provide direct and indirect services to the residents of Fircrest School. These employees collectively represent a diverse workforce that provides program support, health care, and administrative services to maintain or enhance client health and safety, as well as facility operations. While downsizing, Fircrest School needs to maintain two critical objectives:

1. Continue to appropriately protect client's health and safety.
2. Maintain institutional certification to prevent negative financial impacts and maintain public confidence.

Accomplishing each of these objectives is contingent upon a committed and engaged workforce. The Employee Transition Work Team was formed to develop the requirements and document the processes for programs designed to transition employees through downsizing. Areas of interest include retention of employees, retraining of employees, relocation of employees to other employment opportunities, development of opportunities for employees to continue providing resources to clients, and Reduction-in-Force (RIF) processes and support. A framework for a high-level employee transition process has been drafted and includes:

- **Employee Support** to assist all employees through the downsizing process
- **Employee Retention** to retain employees at Fircrest as needed, as well as state workers within the state system
- **Employee Separation** to support employees who are identified for separation
- **Employee Communication** to provide timely, reliable information

Employee input is a critical element of this work. To better understand the needs of employees involved in a downsizing activity, the Fircrest Downsizing and RHC Consolidation Project Support Unit conducted employee focus groups with RHC employees, as well as a sampling of Case Managers and SOLA staff. The objectives for the focus groups included:

1. Determining what resources and services employees believe are most important to:
 - Support employees through a downsizing process.
 - Retain employees through a downsizing process.
 - Separate employees affected by downsizing.
 - Communicate with employees through a downsizing process.
2. Determining what resources and services employees believe are most important across the four categories (support, retention, separation, and communication) during a downsizing process.

General observations for each of these objectives were measured to capture employee's general preference of needs during downsizing. Each objective was also assessed from the perspective of a person receiving a RIF notification to determine more immediate or short-term employee needs.

Approach

Focus groups were conducted between February 17 and February 28, 2004. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours. Eleven focus groups were conducted at the following locations:

| Location | Number of Focus Groups | Position Classifications | Comments |
|----------------------|------------------------|---|--|
| Fircrest School | 3 | ACs, ATSS, SOLA | |
| | 1 | Health Care Professionals | |
| | 1 | Support Services | |
| | 1 | Administration | |
| Rainier School | 2 | Mixed (ACs, ATS, SOLA, Health Care Professionals, Support Services, Administration, and other staff as noted above) | *Francis Haddon Morgan employees also attended the sessions at Rainier |
| Lakeland Village | 2 | Mixed | |
| Yakima Valley School | 1 | Mixed | |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>11</i> | | |

Selection Criteria

Focus group participants were selected based on a stratified random sample. Selection variables for participants included RHC site, position, and tenure. Positions were categorized in the following areas: (a) ACs, (including SOLA), ATSS, and Field Case Managers, (b) Health Care Professionals, (c) Support Services, and (d) Administration. Percentages of positions included in the focus groups reflected RHC demographics. Tenure was included, representing two categories of employees: (1) those employees who have worked for Washington State for 10 years or more, and (2) those employees who have worked for Washington State for less than 10 years. Participant lists were computer generated for each RHC site and provided to the RHC superintendents along with invitation letters (see Appendix A), focus group agendas (see Appendix B), and preliminary employee transition resources lists for distribution.

Participants

A total of 114 employees were invited to the focus group sessions. A total of 92 employees participated in the focus group sessions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during each focus group session through a multi-voting process, as well as narrative data documentation. Data analysis procedures included quantitative analysis using Excel and Access. Narrative data was organized according to themes. A Technical Advisory Work Group of management and labor representatives confirmed the focus group findings. This group also developed recommendations reflecting employee's preferences and needs. These recommendations were presented to the Employee Transition Work Team for further review and consideration. The next section of this report identifies the employee preferences, narrative supporting data, and preliminary recommendations for employee transition.

Employee Preferences

During the focus group sessions, employees were asked to identify the most important resources for employees during downsizing. Preliminary resources were offered for review and consideration, and represented the areas of support, retention, separation, and communication. After discussion of the existing resources, employees were given the opportunity to vote for resources they believed were most important. Participants voted for resources across each of the four categories, as well as within each of the four categories. The information contained in this section describes the employee preferences organized in the following manner:

Part I: Statewide preferences

- A. General Preferences
- B. RIF Preferences
- C. Comparison of General and RIF Preferences

Part II: Site Specific Preferences

- A. General Preferences Across Categories by Site
- B. RIF Preferences Across Categories by Site
- C. Fircrest Specific Preferences

Part III: Narrative Data Themes

PART I: STATEWIDE PREFERENCES

A. General Preferences - Employee Transition Needs

The information contained in this section reflects focus group participant preferences at a statewide level across categories for general preferences, followed by general preferences for each category (support, retention, separation, and communication).

1. Employee Preferences Across Categories: General Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|--|---|------------------|
| Medical Coverage | Grace period of medical coverage or reduced payment for coverage. | 12.1% |
| Voluntary Retirement /Separation Incentive | Voluntary program where eligible employees are offered an incentive for separation or retirement or early retirement. | 11.5% |
| Career Transition Center | On-site resources and equipment for job search, preparation, and activation. | 9.1% |

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---|--|------------------|
| Information: Reliable and Available (Activity Web-Site/Phone) | Reliable information about (a) what, (b) why, (c) how and (d) according to whom. Information and data are available with employee access to informational website or 1-800 number to learn information about project status. | 7.2% |
| Training/Retraining | Continuum of training opportunities for employee support, retention, and separation. | 5.8% |

2. Employee Support: General Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Career Transition Center | On-site resources and equipment for job search, preparation, and activation. | 15.7% |
| Reliable Information | What, why, how and according to whom. Information and data are available. | 14.0% |
| Employee Transition Coordinator | On-site employee transition coordinator for employee consultation and assistance. | 11.3% |
| RIF Orientation | Education and information on actual process, formal and informal options, process, retirement, COBRA, and other separation supports. | 9.8% |
| Human Resources Office | Identified contact person within Human Resources to provide education and information on available services. | 8.5% |
| Employee Advisory Services | Confidential employee assistance program for employees and families – Help individuals clarify problems and develop a plan for resolving them, along with referral to facilitate resolution. | 5.9% |

3. Employee Retention: General Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------|
| RIF Transition Pool | Job placement service that relies on skill match to help employees who are at risk of receiving a RIF find a state position. | 12.6% |
| Internal Agency Position Holds | Agreement to not fill positions permanently across the agency (or allow employee to accept position, but not move to position until the facility closes) | 10.3% |
| State Qualification Modification | Modification of state job classifications minimum qualifications for potentially displaced employees. | 10.1% |
| Retention Incentive | Lump sum or incremental financial or educational incentive for retaining employees at the site until closure or downsizing is completed. | 9.8% |
| Training/Retraining | Training or retraining of employees for identified positions and professional development. | 8.7% |
| Retention Packages | To include a package approach of incentives, such as training, financial incentives, and position holds. | 8.0% |

4. Employee Separation: General Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---|--|------------------|
| Medical Coverage | Grace period of medical coverage or reduced payment for coverage. | 21.0% |
| Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentive | Voluntary program where eligible employees are offered an incentive for separation or retirement or early retirement. | 17.1% |
| RIF Transition Pool | Job placement service that relies on skill match to help employees who are at risk of receiving a RIF find a state position. | 10.0% |
| Retirement Funds Access | Access to retirement funds without penalty for business development or living expenses | 8.6% |
| Training/Retraining | Select training/retraining programs for position preparation and professional development. | 7.6% |
| Unemployment Option | Ability to receive unemployment if voluntarily separates from position. | 6.2% |

5. Employee Communication: General Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|----------------------------|--|------------------|
| Activity Website/Phone # | Employee access to informational website or 1-800 number to learn information about project status. (DDD, Union) | 19.8% |
| Management Training | Management training around strategies and effective ways to communicate with employees during downsizing. | 10.9% |
| HR Communication Source | Identified person/position within Human Resources for on-going communication. | 10.6% |
| Union | Union Meetings | 10.3% |
| Departmental Meetings | More meetings to provide information about what is happening, acting as a filter to provide more reliable information to larger groups of employees. | 9.7% |
| Communication of Resources | Hardcopy materials defining all employee transition resources available. | 8.6% |

B. RIF Preferences - Employee Transition Needs

To assess if employee preferences could vary based on more immediate needs, focus group participants were asked to identify Reduction-in-Force (RIF) preferences. Specifically, they were asked to identify the single most important resource if they had just received a RIF notification. The information contained in this section reflects focus group participant preferences at a statewide level across categories for RIF preferences, followed by RIF preferences for each category of support, retention, separation, and communication.

1. Employee Preferences Across Categories: RIF Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---|---|------------------|
| Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentive Program | Voluntary program where eligible employees are offered an incentive for separation or retirement or early retirement. | 16.9% |

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Medical Coverage | Grace period of medical coverage or reduced payment for coverage. | 15.7% |
| Training/Retraining | Continuum of training opportunities for employee support, retention, and separation. | 8.9% |
| Career Transition Center | On-site resources and equipment for job search, preparation, and activation. | 7.9% |
| Employee Transition Coordinator | On-site employee transition coordinator for employee consultation and assistance. | 6.7% |
| RIF Transition Pool | Job placement service that relies on skill match to help employees who are at risk of receiving a RIF find a state position. | 6.7% |

2. Employee Support: RIF Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Career Transition Center | On-site resources and equipment for job search, preparation, and activation. | 28.4% |
| Employee Transition Coordinator | On-site employee transition coordinator for employee consultation and assistance. | 18.9% |
| RIF Orientation | Education and information on actual process, formal and informal options, process, retirement, COBRA, and other separation supports. | 10.5% |
| Reliable Information | What, why, how and according to whom. Information and data are available. | 8.4% |
| Human Resources Office | Identified contact person within Human Resources to provide education and information on available services. | 7.4% |
| List of Openings Across State | Accessible list of all position opportunities available across the state system. | 7.4% |

3. Employee Retention: RIF Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------|
| RIF Transition Pool | Job placement service that relies on skill match to help employees who are at risk of receiving a RIF find a state position. | 19.8% |
| Internal Agency Position Holds | Agreement to not fill positions permanently across the agency (or allow employee to accept position, but not move to position until facility closure) | 16.5% |
| Training/Retraining | Training or retraining of employees for identified positions and professional development. | 12.1% |
| Retention Packages | To include a package approach of incentives, such as training, financial incentives, and position holds. | 8.8% |
| Career Services | On site preparation and support services for state positions and other employment options such as job searches, resume writing, interviewing techniques, how to present yourself, etc. | 7.7% |
| Retention Incentive | Lump sum or incremental financial or educational incentive for retaining employees at the site until closure or downsizing is completed. | 6.6% |

4. Employee Separation: RIF Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|---|--|------------------|
| Medical Coverage | Grace period of medical coverage or reduced payment for coverage. | 37.1% |
| Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentive | Voluntary program where eligible employees are offered an incentive for separation or retirement or early retirement. | 30.3% |
| Training/Retraining | Select training/retraining programs for position preparation and professional development. | 7.9% |
| Retirement Funds | Access to retirement funds without penalty for business development or living expenses | 5.6% |
| Severance Pay | Financial package for separation. | 4.5% |
| RIF Transition Pool | Job placement service that relies on skill match to help employees who are at risk of receiving a RIF find a state position. | 3.4% |

5. Employee Communication: RIF Preferences

| Resource | Definition | % of Total Votes |
|----------------------------|--|------------------|
| Activity Website/Phone # | Employee access to informational website or 1-800 number to learn information about project status. (DDD, Union) | 26.4% |
| HR Communication Source | Identified person/position within Human Resources for on-going communication. | 13.8% |
| Departmental Meetings | More meetings to provide information about what is happening, acting as a filter to provide more reliable information to larger groups of employees. | 12.6% |
| Communication of Resources | Hardcopy materials defining all employee transition resources available. | 12.6% |
| Union | Union Meetings | 9.2% |
| Management Training | Management training around strategies and effective ways to communicate with employees during downsizing. | 8.0% |

C. Comparison of General Preferences and RIF Preferences

The General Preference questions focused on employee transition needs during downsizing and could be viewed as longer term needs from an employee perspective. The RIF Preference question focused on more immediate needs as if the employee received a RIF notification on the day of the focus group. The purpose of asking this question was to guide the employee to think in terms of more short-term needs. The information contained in this section reflects focus group participant preferences at a statewide level across categories for general preferences, in comparison to RIF preferences. The following differences in the General and RIF preference responses were identified.

Comparison of General Preferences and RIF Preferences

| | General Preferences | % of Total Votes | | RIF Preferences | % of Total Votes |
|---|--|------------------|---|---|------------------|
| 1 | Medical Coverage | 12.1% | 1 | Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentive Program | 16.9% |
| 2 | Voluntary Retirement /Separation Incentive | 11.5% | 2 | Medical Coverage | 15.7% |

| | General Preferences | % of Total Votes | | RIF Preferences | % of Total Votes |
|---|---|------------------|---|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 3 | Career Transition Center | 9.1% | 3 | Training/Retraining | 8.9% |
| 4 | Information: Reliable and available (activity website/800#) | 7.2% | 4 | Career Transition Center | 7.9% |
| 5 | Training/Retraining | 5.8% | 5 | Employee Transition Coordinator | 6.7% |
| | | | 5 | RIF Transition Pool | 6.7% |

PART II: SITE SPECIFIC PREFERENCES

The focus group sessions were held at four of the five RHCs in Washington State (Fircrest School, Lakeland Village, Rainier School, and Yakima Valley School). While Fircrest employees are the most directly involved in the Fircrest Downsizing and RHC Consolidation project, employees at other RHCs or in the field/SOLA may be affected by the downsizing activities. Each RHC may be experiencing different reactions to the change or anticipated change and have slightly different needs. Fircrest employees have been aware of the downsizing mandate from the legislature as early as July 2003. At the time of the focus group sessions in February, two cottages had been identified for closure in March 2004. To determine if employee needs during an active downsize vary based on direct involvement, the data from the focus group sessions were reviewed to explore differences and similarities between sites directly impacted by downsizing in comparison to those less affected.

Lakeland Village, Rainier School, and Yakima Valley School offered one to two focus groups. To protect employee anonymity, focus group data will not be broken down by site when there are less than two focus groups at the site. These data compare Fircrest General and RIF preferences to the other RHC General and RIF preferences. Resources identified as important by a single site (Fircrest School, Lakeland Village, Rainier School, and Yakima Valley School) were noted in the column titled “site specific items.”

In general, these data suggest that employees at different RHCs expressed preferences for different employee transition resources. This also suggests the importance of assessing directly impacted employees and potentially impacted employees at other RHCs when determining employee transition needs related to downsizing.

A. General Preferences Across Categories by Site

| Resource | Fircrest % of Total Votes | Other RHCs % of Total Votes | Site Specific Item |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Medical Coverage | 10.6% | 14.4% | |
| Voluntary Retirement /Separation Incentive | 6.5% | 16.0% | |
| Career Transition Center | 6.5% | 11.3% | |
| Information: Reliable & Activity Web-Site/Phone | 4.7% | 9.3% | |
| Employee Training/Retraining | 10.0% | 2.1% | |
| RIF Transition Pool | 1.2% | 1.0% | |
| Internal agency holds | 6.5% | 3.6% | |
| Retention Packages | 0% | 6.2% | Yes |
| Comparable Worth | 5.9% | .52% | |
| Human Resources Office | 0% | 5.2% | Yes |
| RIF Orientation | 2.4% | 2.3% | |

Two resources were found to be site specific for General Preferences. The two resources include:

- Retention Packages
- Human Resources Office

Both of these resources were identified as important resources for non-direct downsizing sites (sites other than Fircrest). Resources noted important for a single site other than Fircrest will be communicated to the appropriate RHC superintendent as an area employees felt was important in the event of a downsize.

B. RIF Preferences Across Categories by Site

| Resource | Fircrest % of Total Votes | Other RHCs % of Total Votes | Site Specific Item |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentive Program | 4.7% | 28.3% | |
| Medical Coverage | 27.9% | 4.3% | |
| Training/Retraining | 18.7% | 0% | Yes |
| Career Transition Center | 2.3% | 13.0% | |
| Employee Transition Coordinator | 0% | 13.0% | |
| RIF Transition Pool | 4.7% | 8.7% | |
| Internal Agency Position Holds | 9.3% | 0% | Yes |
| Retirement Funds | 0% | 8.7% | Yes |
| Information: Reliable and Available (Activity Web site/Phone) | 2.3% | 2.2% | |
| Retention Packages | 0% | 6.5% | Yes |
| Human Resources Office | 0% | 6.5% | Yes |
| Comparable Worth | 4.7% | 0% | Yes |

Six resources were found to be site specific. Three of these were found to be specific to Fircrest, while the three other resources were specific to other RHCs. These resources include:

- *Fircrest Specific Preferences:*
 - Training/Retraining
 - Internal Agency Position Holds
 - Comparable Worth
- *Other RHC Specific Preferences*
 - Retention Packages
 - Human Resource Office
 - Retirement Funds Access

C. Fircrest Specific Preferences

As noted previously, Fircrest is the directly impacted site for downsizing and RHC consolidation. The employees at Fircrest have been aware of the downsizing activities since July 2003 and understand there will be an impact in FTEs. To better understand the preferences of the employees at Fircrest, the data from Fircrest was assessed separately from other RHCs. The following information depicts the General Preferences and RIF Preferences for the six Fircrest focus group sessions.

1. Fircrest Employee Preferences Across Categories: General Preferences

| Resource | Definition | Percent of Total |
|---|--|------------------|
| Medical Coverage | Grace period of medical coverage or reduced payment for coverage. | 10.6% |
| Training/Retraining | Continuum of training for support, retention, and separation. | 10.0% |
| Voluntary Retirement /Separation Incentive | Voluntary program where eligible employees are offered an incentive for separation or retirement or early retirement. | 6.5% |
| Career Transition Center | On-site resources and equipment for job search, preparation, and activation. | 6.5% |
| Internal Agency holds | Agreement to not fill positions permanently across the agency (or allow employee to accept position, but not move to position until the facility closes) | 6.5% |
| Information: Reliable and Available (Activity Web-Site/Phone) | Reliable information about (a) what, (b) why, (c) how and (d) according to whom. Information and data are available with employee access to informational website or 1-800 number to learn information about project status. | 4.7% |

2. Fircrest Employee Preferences Across Categories: RIF Preferences

| Resource | Definition | Percent of Total |
|---|--|------------------|
| Medical Coverage | Grace period of medical coverage or reduced payment for coverage. | 27.9% |
| Training/Retraining | Continuum of training for support, retention, and separation. | 18.7% |
| Internal Agency Position Holds | Agreement to not fill positions permanently across the agency (or allow employee to accept position, but not move to position until the facility closes) | 9.3% |
| Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentive Program | Voluntary program where eligible employees are offered an incentive for separation or retirement or early retirement. | 4.7% |
| RIF Transition Pool | Job placement service that relies on skill match to help employees who are at risk of receiving a RIF find a state position. | 4.7% |
| Comparable Worth | Pay what others receive and provide COLAs | 4.7% |

PART III: NARRATIVE DATA THEMES

Narrative data were captured during the focus group sessions to help clarify and support the focus group quantitative information. While the narrative data were not intended to replace the employee quantitative data, significant comments were made that either reinforce the numerical data or exemplify areas employees felt were important to address. Employee comments have been synthesized into the following categorical areas: (a) communication, (b) state employment, (c) professional development/training, (d) medical coverage, early retirement, and other incentives, (e) and interest in a fair, equitable retention process. These areas are further clarified.

- Employees desire enhanced communication efforts. Employee comments on communication issues, concerns, and needs accounted for approximately 25% of all narrative comments combined. Areas identified included:

- The importance of the quality of communication (reliable, timely, predictable)
 - Management communication to staff
 - Access to information about the RIF process
 - Access to information about job opportunities
 - Utilization of a mix of communication methods such as online, 800 # phone access, departmental meetings, the union, and human resources.
- Overall, employees are very interested in staying within the state system. They would like internal agency position holds and a statewide freeze for positions. Most employees expressed interest in some modification of the current RIF process, such as allowing staff with seniority the opportunity to volunteer for positions to minimize the bumping processes. Yet, other employees expressed a preference for continuation of the current system.
 - Some employees are seeking opportunities for professional growth, development, and assistance in refining current job skills. These employees were very interested in training, retraining, and training support opportunities. Other employees expressed little interest in these opportunities.
 - Medical coverage was discussed as one of the most important resources for employees during separation. Other options discussed included such resources as severance pay and early retirement.
 - Overall, retention incentives were seen as favorable for retaining employees at a downsizing site; however, some employees expressed concern for a fair, equitable retention process in distributing any retention incentives.

High-Level Recommendations

During the months of March and April 2004, the Technical Advisory Work Group met to review and discuss the information collected from the focus group sessions and to develop preliminary recommendations. The following recommendations were developed after a thorough review and consideration of these data:

1. The initial high-level process for employee transition included four categories: support, retention, separation, and communication. It is recommended to reorganize the proposed employee transition high-level process to include three instead of four categories: (1) employee support, (2) employee retention, and (3) employee separation. Communication was an important concern of employees across categories and should be moved to a sub-category within each of the three proposed categories.
2. Develop a communication plan that includes:
 - a. Reliable information
 - b. Predictable intervals for employees across DDD
 - c. Online as well as alternative methods
 - d. Formal and informal communication
 - e. Trust based
 - f. The following elements:
 - Management communication
 - Union communication
 - Communication methods
 - RIF Information
 - Management of External Information (responsive/proactive)
 - Emphasis on the changing nature of the environment
3. Develop policy and identify resource needs for potential options such as:
 - a. Grace period post-separation medical coverage
 - b. Retirement: Voluntary Incentive and Early Retirement
 - c. Internal agency position holds
4. Develop resources and a process for Career Transition to include:
 - a. A Career Transition Center
 - b. A Career Transition Coordinator (local and centralized)
 - c. Awareness and understanding of the RIF Transition Pool
5. Develop a training/retraining plan for identified Fircrest employees. Training should include options to support the various phases of support, retention, and separation and include:
 - a. Identification of who needs training
 - b. Identification of what types of training are needed
 - c. Identification of training resources
 - d. Cost/Benefit analysis of training

6. While retention was an area of focus for the employee focus group sessions, a question remains if this process adequately addressed retention needs from a site perspective. If the answer to this question is no, there should be a process to more adequately define retention needs from a downsizing site perspective.

These recommendations have been submitted to the Employee Transition Work Team for further consideration.

Next Steps, Accomplishments to Date, and Schedule

The next steps for the employee transition focus group recommendations include:

- Evaluation of the feasibility of implementing the recommendations
- Implementation of select employee transition recommendations within local authority and budget constraints
- Identify resource needs for selected recommendations and review current resources
- Completion of a detailed plan of services for employees who may be affected by the downsizing, to be available by the end of July 2004
- Submission of budget impact items for the supplemental (if needed) and 2005-07 biennial budget process

The following accomplishments toward the recommendations have occurred as of May 2004.

| | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>Status</i> |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | COMMUNICATION Reorganize the proposed employee transition high-level process to include three instead of four categories: (1) employee support, (2) employee retention, and (3) employee separation. | The current high-level employee transition process reflected in the draft transition plan has been modified to include three categories: (a) support, (b) retention, and (c) separation. Communication has been identified as a critical element across all three of these categories. |
| 2. | COMMUNICATION Develop a communication plan that includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reliable information b. Predictable intervals for employees across DDD c. Online as well as alternative methods d. Formal and informal e. Trust based f. The following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management communication ▪ Union communication ▪ Communication methods ▪ RIF Information ▪ Management of External Information (responsive/proactive) ▪ Emphasis on the changing nature | An employee communication team has been formed to develop a communication plan. This plan will include a short-term plan for May-September information, as well as a long-term plan through June 2005. Representation on this time limited team include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fircrest School Employee Transition Coordinator ▪ DDD Headquarters ▪ ADSA Communication ▪ Region 4 Field Services/SOLA ▪ Local Labor - The Federation ▪ Local Labor - 1199 ▪ Project Support Unit <p><i>Deliverables include:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Short-Term Communication Plan |



| | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>Status</i> |
|----|---|--|
| | of the environment | 2. Long-Term Communication Plan 3. Weekly Communication Recommendation |
| 3. | RETENTION/SEPARATION INCENTIVES Develop policy and identify resource needs for potential options such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Medical coverage▪ Retirement: Voluntary Incentive and Early Retirement▪ Internal agency position holds | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The first two identified areas in this recommendation will require legislative direction. It has been proposed that two separate teams will be formed to focus on medical coverage options as well as the voluntary retirement incentive/early retirement option.▪ The employee transition work group has drafted a preliminary process for position holds within DDD. This process will be submitted to the project review process for consideration and implementation. Position holds extending to ADSA or DSHS will be explored. |
| 4. | CAREER TRANSITION Develop resources and a process for Career Transition to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A Career Transition Center▪ A Career Transition Coordinator (local and centralized)▪ Awareness and understanding of the RIF Transition Pool | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A Career Transition Center has been developed at Fircrest. This center is located in the Adult Training Program Building (85 West) and opened on May 24th. Center resources include online resources, hard copy materials, books, and computer resources.▪ A Career Transition Coordinator is available at Fircrest to assist employees with career exploration, career goals, and career development.▪ Career transition workshops and forums have been held at Fircrest and will continue to be provided during downsizing.▪ The RIF Transition Pool is a current resource available to employees when they have been notified they are “at risk of RIF.” Human Resources at Fircrest will work with DOP to distribute informational materials on the RIF Transition Pool. These materials will be available in the Fircrest HR Office, Career Transition Center, and on the web site for RHC Consolidation. Human Resources will work directly with staff at risk to access the RIF Transition Pool. |



| | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>Status</i> |
|----|--|--|
| 5. | <p>TRAINING Develop a training/retraining plan for the directly affected site. Training should include options to support the various phases of support, retention, and separation and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identification of who needs training▪ Identification of what types of training are needed▪ Identification of training resources▪ Cost/Benefit analysis of training | <p>The Employee Transition Work Group is in the process of developing a plan to assess training needs and resources. A continuum of training will be developed to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Training for employee support▪ Training for employee retention▪ Training for employee separation <p>Next Steps include: All staff survey including training questions anticipated to be distributed to Fircrest employees in June 2004.</p> |
| 6. | <p>RETENTION Retention needs from a site perspective</p> | <p>Explore Options: Training, Career Exploration, Incentives, Position Holds, and other options.</p> |

Employee Transition: Employee Focus Group Recommendations Proposed Schedule/Timeline - DRAFT

This schedule is a planning document and is subject to change.

| <i>Month</i> | <i>Activity</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| May 2004 | <p>Employee Communication Team establishes timeline for communication plan Fircrest Career Transition Center opens/Career Transition Coordinator Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resume Writing ▪ Career Exploration <p>Managing Change and Transitions Workshop (Fircrest Supervisors/Managers) EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Training Plan Formation/Survey addressing training needs developed Develop approach for policy and identify resource needs for potential options such as medical coverage, voluntary incentive and early retirement, and internal agency position holds Employee Focus Group Report completed and distributed</p> |
| June 2004 | <p>Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for Fircrest Supervisors EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Fircrest employees at risk of RIF prior to September 2004 notified Short-term Communication Plan Finalized for May – September 2004 RIF Transition Pool Materials Distributed at Fircrest Evaluation/feasibility of implementing employee transition recommendations</p> |
| July 2004 | <p>Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees at Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest RIF orientation for notified employees at risk of RIF prior to September 2004 Employee Transition Plan finalized for 2003-05 Biennium</p> |
| August 2004 | <p>Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Long-Term Employee Communication Plan Finalized September 2004 - June 2005 Submission of budget impact items for the supplemental (if needed) Submission of budget impact items for 2005-07 biennial budget process</p> |
| September 2004 | <p>Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees at Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Fircrest Cottage Closure</p> |

Employee Transition: Employee Focus Group Recommendations Proposed Schedule/Timeline - DRAFT (continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| October 2004 – December 2004 | Continued employee transition planning, implementation, and evaluation Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees of Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Fircrest employees at risk of RIF prior to March 2005 notified |
| January 2005 | Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees of Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest RIF Orientation for notified employees at risk of RIF prior to March 2005 |
| February 2005 | Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees of Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest |
| March 2005 | Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees of Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Fircrest Cottage Closure |
| April 2005 – June 2005 | Career Transition Workshops at Fircrest Career Transition Center/Career Transition Coordinator available at Fircrest Change and Transition Workshop for identified employees of Fircrest EAS available for individual and group appointments at Fircrest Continued employee transition planning, implementation, and evaluation |

**In July 2005, Civil Service Reform will be in effect. At this point in time, Employee Transition Work Group members are aware of the need for potential modifications in current plans and processes.*

Summary

The Employee Transition Work Team has been charged with developing the requirements and documentation of the processes for programs designed to transition employees through downsizing. This includes retention of employees, retraining of employees, relocation of employees to other employment opportunities, development of opportunities for employees to continue providing resources to clients, and Reduction-in-Force (RIF) processes and support.

Employee input is a critical element of this work. Successful downsizing efforts have been implemented from the top-down, while also initiated from the bottom-up. Employees are a source of innovative, creative ideas. Tapping into this human resource for input is an important and valuable step in the process.

The purpose of the Employee Focus Groups was to better understand the needs of employees involved in a downsizing activity. This included determining what resources and services employees believe are most important to (a) support employees, (b) retain employees, (c) separate employees, and (d) communicate with employees through downsizing.

The focus group feedback depicts a variety of employee preferences. In some instances, the feedback identifies current resources and programs that are working well that should be continued, such as the RIF transition pool and a Career Transition Coordinator. In other instances, the feedback identifies opportunities for improvement in current resources and programs such as employee communication and training. In addition, the feedback warrants exploration of new ideas, policy, and extended support for employees in areas such as post-separation medical coverage and early retirement. While there have been a number of suggestions from the focus group participants, several of the suggestions will require resource decisions and/or new policies in order to be implemented. Evaluation of the recommendations proposed by the Technical Advisory Work Group in response to employee feedback will be an important step to determine the feasibility of implementation. Areas within local authority and within current budget constraints may be more readily adopted. Areas warranting significant budgetary responsiveness and direction from the legislature will take longer to determine viability and feasibility.

The employee feedback collected during the Employee Focus Groups will be an important resource guiding the planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts of the Employee Transition Work Group.



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

ADSA Aging & Disability
Services Administration

Appendices

February 11, 2004

To: *(Insert Employee Participant)*
From: *(Insert RHC Superintendent)*
Re: Employee Focus Groups

A Preliminary Transition Plan has been drafted for the downsizing of Fircrest School. Downsizing of a Residential Habilitation Center (RHC) can affect employees directly and indirectly across the state. Understanding the needs of employees during this transition is an important part of an overall downsizing plan. This allows for the identification of meaningful transition resources, programs, and services. To better understand employee needs during RHC consolidation and Fircrest School downsizing, a series of employee focus groups are scheduled for February 2004.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in one of the focus groups. As a valuable employee of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, you have important information that is needed to support employees through a downsizing process. We hope to tap into that resource through your participation in a focus group. This letter provides you with important information regarding the focus group logistics, format, and next steps.

Focus Group Logistics

Each focus group session will include approximately 10 employees and last between 1 ½ to 2 hours. Your focus group will be held on **Thursday, February 19th from 10:00am – 12:00pm in the Main Conference Room**. Efforts have been made to offer the session during your typical work schedule. However, if the focus group time is not during your current work schedule, your supervisor will be contacted to make an adjustment for that day.

Focus Group Format

The attached agenda displays the focus group format, along with the actual questions that will be posed to the group for discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please understand that we will not be able to answer questions about your individual circumstances during the focus group. The focus group session is designed to solicit employee input, interest, and priorities regarding employee transition options. We encourage participants to think creatively and answer honestly. Information collected during each session will be grouped together. No individual person will be known or identified by name anywhere in the data documentation. The focus groups will be lead by Wendy Korthuis-Smith, a project consultant with Aging and Disability Services Administration. Wendy is an experienced focus group facilitator and will assist in providing structure to protect confidentiality of all employees throughout the process.

Next Steps

Upon completion of the eleven focus group sessions, a collective team of labor representatives and management will review the employee information and define specific recommendations for employee transition support. These recommendations will be further assessed for inclusion into the overall employee transition plan.

We look forward to your participation in this focus group. We welcome any comments you might have about the process, materials, or logistics. Please feel free to contact Wendy Korthuis-Smith at (360) 902-8190 or korthwa@dshs.wa.gov if you have any questions, concerns, or need accommodations in order to participate. Mike Holyan (360) 829-3089 and June Robinson-Fritz (206) 361-3486 are labor representatives who are also available to answer your questions. Thank you for your support of this important work.

EMPLOYEE TRANSITION FOCUS GROUP

| AGENDA ITEM | TIME |
|--|------------|
| 1. Welcome and Introductions | 5 Minutes |
| 2. Purpose of the Focus Group | 10 Minutes |
| 3. Employee Transition Preliminary Work | 10 Minutes |
| 4. Focus Group Questions: | 60 Minutes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employee Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After reviewing the list of potential employee support options, what would you add, delete, or revise? ○ What options are most important to you? ○ How would you prioritize these options? ○ If you received a RIF notification today, what would be most important to you? ▪ Employee Retention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After reviewing the list of potential employee retention options, what would you add, delete, or revise? ○ What options are most important to you? ○ How would you prioritize these options? ○ If you received a RIF notification today, what would be most important to you? ▪ Employee Separation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After reviewing the list of potential employee separation options, what would you add, delete, or revise? ○ What options are most important to you? ○ How would you prioritize these options? ○ If you received a RIF notification today, what would be most important to you? ▪ Employee Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After reviewing the list of potential employee communication options, what would you add, delete, or revise? ○ What options are most important to you? ○ How would you prioritize these options? ○ If you received a RIF notification today, what would be most important to you? ▪ Overall Employee Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After reviewing the list of potential employee transition options, what would you add, delete, or revise? ○ What options are most important to you? ○ How would you prioritize these options? ○ If you received a RIF notification today, what would be most important to you? | |
| 5. Next Steps and Focus Group Assessment | 5 Minutes |

Persons with disabilities or special needs may call the ADSA Project Support Unit and request a hard copy:

360.902.8190

WASHINGTON STATE

**Department of Social and Health Services
Aging and Disability Services Administration**

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www1.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/rhc.shtml

Hard copy versions of this plan are printed on recycled paper.

